

CHAPTERS
OF MY LIFE

*From
Tulips
to
Gumtrees*

CATHARINA (TOOS)
JANSSENS-ADEMA



From Tulips to Gumtrees
Chapters of My Life
Catharina (Toos) Janssens-Adema

For my family:
Sons and daughters-in-law
Grandchildren
Great grandchildren
And beyond.

As told to Wendy Janssens on
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The Heart of it all: My Family.

I was born in the Netherlands on 6 June 1930 in the city called Leeuwarden in the province of Friesland.

My mother gave birth to all of her children at home, always assisted by the same midwife. She was part of the family as she came 13 times! My father would always be with my mother and as soon as the baby was born, the midwife would hand the baby to my father. He would go to the wash basin and clean the baby, completely wash it, dress it, and then hand the baby to my mother. The midwife thought he was the best assistant she ever had!

There were 13 children in our family and I was number eight. There were five boys and two girls when I was born. I appreciated being number eight and not being number one or two.

There was nine years difference between number one, Martinus, and me.

The Adema children:

1. Tinus (Martinus), 1921
2. Leen (Helena), 1922
3. Wim (Wilhelmus), 1923
4. Jan (John), 1925
5. Juus (Justina), 1926
6. Herman, 1928
7. Julius, 1929
8. Toos (Catharina), 1930
9. Mieke (Maria), 1931
10. Tienke (Catharina Wilhelmina), 1934
11. Joop (Johannes), 1935
12. Ben (Bernardus), 1936
13. Gerard (Gerardus), 1940



*Back row: Wim, Juus, Tinus, Leen
Middle Row: Julius, Father, Tienke, Mother, Herman
Front Row: Joop, Mieke, Ben, Toos, Jan
Bottom right: Gerard*

My parents

I never found out exactly how my parents met but they were not young when they married – my mother was 25 years and my father, 30 years. My mother lived in Sneek but she moved to Leeuwarden.

My father liked to go to the barber every day. Can you imagine? He didn't shave himself. He would go to the barber every afternoon at around 4.00pm and there would be all kinds of people there that were also wholesalers in meat and others with different businesses. They would talk about all kinds of things, including politics. It was a daily ritual, except Sundays of course. On Sunday, one of my big brothers had to shave my father. He couldn't do it himself.

I think we were a middle-class family – I never felt poor. Purchases were only made when you had the money – nothing was ever bought on credit. My father always paid cash. For example, we purchased a new piano from the Gansevoort piano store. It was such a beautiful store selling pianos, organs and music. Of course, the owner knew my father well. After Leen had tested the pianos and selected the piano we required, my father would then talk about price. He always would negotiate with cash at a very good price.



Father and mother on their wedding day.

My grandparents

I remember my father's parents quite well but I don't remember my mother's father, only her mother. My maternal grandfather died when I was little and he was often mentioned. I heard that he played the violin and loved music. My maternal grandmother was quite a character and I was named after her. She lived until she was about 90 years of age. My maternal grandmother lived about a 20 minute walk from us but she stayed with us very often until later in life before she lived in a type of nursing home.

She would stay with one of her daughters for months at a time and then go to another daughter and stay there for months. At our house, she had her own room upstairs with a small living room and bedroom. One other bedroom was converted into a little kitchen

where she could make her own tea, breakfast and little things. Her dinner was cooked by my mother and would be brought up to her by Leen or Juus. I think she stayed with us more than her other daughters as she loved being at our place, probably because of all the kids.

My maternal grandmother was very religious and always watched that we were praying properly and making a cross before dinner. We always had to say prayers. When friends came over, she always wanted to know if they were catholic. We often teased her by bending over the table, hiding our friends but she would always get up to make sure she could see them. If our friends were not catholic, we would teach them how to make a cross [laugh]. We always had a lot of fun with her.

For instance, when she wanted to change money, say a 10 guilder note, she would ask my father to change it to, say, a 5 guilder note and some small change. My father would always try to shortchange her and even if one cent was missing, she would say 'Brandus, you made a mistake'. She knew and was on the ball.

My paternal grandmother was the kindest woman ever, and my paternal grandfather was quite a character. Once, Mieke and I stayed with them for about a fortnight and we really enjoyed it. Our grandmother would give us a boiled egg every morning for breakfast. We were spoilt, that's for sure, and we loved it. We would go for a long walk with our grandfather where they lived in Sneek and everyone we encountered

Early days

Our house was big and it was perfect for a large family. It was originally two houses that was built for two families – for my father and for my uncle as they had a business together, although I can't remember my uncle living there as they had split up the business after a while. When my uncle left, the two houses became one so we had a very big house with large living quarters and nine bedrooms. Two of the nine bedrooms were very small, just enough for a single bed and a little cupboard. The other bedrooms were double sized.

As children, we shared our bedroom, which we loved. When Mieke and I were 3 or 4 years old, we would sleep together in one big double bed. Then when Trienke was about 3, she joined us – so there were then three of us sharing one big

would know him. The people would ask if we were the children of Brandus or Jelle, and my grandfather would reply that we were Brandus's children. They would always say that we were lovely children.

My paternal grandfather was in the same business as my father – a butcher and meat wholesaler. It was in the family. My father and uncle were butchers and meat wholesalers but my father's other brother was only a butcher. In those days most sons followed in their father's footsteps and it's why the Adema's were so well known in Friesland as they did a lot of business with butchers and farmers. My great-grandfather may have done the same but I don't really know about him.

double bed, and we loved that too. It was just part of being together and we would always sing before we went to sleep.

The sleeping arrangements changed when I was about 10 years of age. We had a double bed and a single bed in the room, and I would sleep in the single bed. The arrangements changed again when I was about 14 when I shared a bed with my older sister, Juus. That was lovely too and I felt fantastic being with my older sister.

The boys did the same; they all shared beds. Nobody had a single bed – they were all double beds and two would sleep in one bed. That was very European. They still may do that in Holland but I'm not sure.

Golden Days: Happiest Childhood Memories.

Music

Leen – the eldest daughter – had piano lessons and she was an excellent pianist. She would play the piano straight after dinner (which we had at midday) and we would sing as we cleared the table, bringing everything into the kitchen. Leen got the best part by playing the piano. At nighttime, too, it was the same – Leen playing the piano while we cleared the table. My father was very strict about that as he made sure my mother would sit down and relax with the

children doing the clearing and washing up. She would prepare the meal but it would be all of us helping clear up, with the girls usually doing the washing and the boys clearing things away.

We would sing typical Dutch children's songs – popular songs that every child at school learns. Later at primary school, Mieke and I joined the choir and we loved it. Music was so important to us.

Youngest child

Another happy event was when my mother was expecting my youngest brother, Gerard. That was the first time I was aware and understood that my mother was going to have a baby. We were all very excited about it. All of the girls would beg my mother to have a girl as we already had seven boys, and she always responded that she could not promise anything, but who knows? The boys would then ask my father for another boy. All this happened just as Holland was invaded in May 1940 but with Gerard born on 24 November 1940, it made us all happy, it was unbelievable. Number 13. It was such a bright spot.

Naming Gerard turned out to be a bit of a problem because after twelve children named after uncles and aunts, we had run out of uncle and aunt names! The baby needed to be

baptised as soon as possible but when my parents attended the church for the baptism, we still did not have a name for him. My father asked the priest what his name was (as he liked the priest very much) and the priest answered 'Gerardus'. My father announced that the baby's name would be Gerardus and I think the priest was just as happy as we were. He thanked my parents so much for naming the baby after him. So that's how Gerardus got his name.

Every year, that same priest sent a box full of beautiful cakes enough for 15 people. Even when he moved to a retirement place for priests, he continued to send cakes each year. My father got on very well with that priest as he was open-minded and accepted people for who they are and not for their religion. He was a beautiful man, really.

Church

We would all walk to church every Sunday. If we were not ready and downstairs by 8.00am, my father would not be impressed. He would stand at the staircase and call up '*meisjes*' (girls), *it is 8 o'clock*' and we would come down quickly.

In many ways, he was easy going but with certain things like time, we had to be there. The church services were 7am, 8am or 9am and at 10.30am, a high mass service with a choir. We would usually go to the high mass service after

we had cleared up from breakfast. One of us would hold my mother's arm, with my father on the other side, and then we would change sides and take turns to hold their arms. We always wanted to be next to our mother or father.

We met up with friends at church and then walk home for coffee with nice cakes or chocolates. It was very special and we would often have visitors including uncles and aunts. Usually, dinner would be at 12 noon but on Sunday dinner was not held until 1.00pm, which was usually a large roast with everything cooked on top of the stove. Because my father did not want my mother to work on a Sunday,

Holidays

As children we often went to stay at our uncle and aunts farm in Soestdijk – and we loved going there. I remember going there with Jan, Herman, Julius and Mieke. Jan was responsible for all of us catching the trains. My aunt did not have any children and she adored us – and she spoiled us all! We ran around the farm and first thing in the morning we would go to the chicken coop to collect eggs. They also had some fruit trees. It was wonderful.

After the war, I visited an uncle and aunt, Oom Sol and Tante Regina (my father's sister) living in Amsterdam. They were not married before the war and my uncle was Jewish so my aunt had to find a place for him to hide and ensure he had food, etc. Sol was the only survivor of his family and after the war he married my aunt. We didn't know anything about this, of course,

Christmas

We celebrated Christmas by going to church at about 4.30am or 5am on Christmas morning. This was followed by a big breakfast at home. When I was older I stayed home from church in order to prepare the breakfast for everyone's return. There was always two of us who would remain home and I was always one of them. We always had a special type of bread. *Suiker brood* –

everything was prepared earlier – potatoes, etc. By this time, our uncle and aunt (my mother's sister) had retired and sold their business, so they lived with us upstairs on the second floor. This was quite common. My Uncle Johannes would prepare the vegetables every day, including Sunday's meal. They lived with us for many years.

Sunday after church was always fun with singing or playing the piano or violin. Sunday was always church followed by such a lovely get together followed by a big meal. In the afternoon we would go for long walks with friends.

as it was all kept secret. My father knew about it but did not talk about it. After they got married, I stayed with them once at their place in Keizersgracht, which overlooked the river and was very well known in Amsterdam. Their surname was Schijver and they had a textile shop and were doing quite well. We loved Oom Sol because he told such funny jokes and had such a good sense of humour. Tante Regina was a beautiful singer. Whenever they would visit us in Leeuwarden, my poor mother would be exhausted because we were all going wild.

I don't recall ever going on a holiday with my parents. My father told me that they went to the Olympics when they were hosted in Amsterdam. My father surprised my mother with tickets to the opening ceremony, but I was not born at this time.

sugar bread! We all loved it, and there was a special type of raisin bread too. Oh, that was beautiful. We also had all types of cold meats and beautiful buns. The table was decorated beautifully.

We had a decorated Christmas tree with candles. Can you believe it? They were real candles you

had to light with a match, imagine? There was always a huge bucket of water nearby just in case of fire. Crazy when you think about it. So dangerous but we loved it. Eventually we had suitable electric decorations.

Christmas morning was so lovely that breakfast took ages. Everyone was so cold when they arrived home from church but it was lovely and warm at home. Leen, of course, would play the piano and we would all sing. Breakfast would last until about 9.30-10am and then it all had to

be cleared up. Before long, some aunts and uncles would come over for coffee and they would have something to drink, I'm not sure what it was, maybe cognac. Then Christmas dinner (lunch) at about 2pm would be a big meal, even though we were so full after breakfast.

Christmas was always a lovely day. We were always hoping for snow and although it snowed on many Christmas Days; it didn't happen every year.



L-R: Mieke, Trienke, Toos



L-R: Juns, Toos, Mieke, Trienke, Leen

Our House: The Place We Called Home.

Our house was built in 1922/23. The address was Schrans No.4-6, Huirnum by Leeuwarden. The house was three stories high.

There were two ways to enter the house. One entrance was on the very right side. There was a small hallway and staircase to go up to the first floor. The other entrance was on the left-hand side of the house and another staircase to go to the first floor. There was a beautiful big lounge room, dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms on the first floor. From this floor, there were also two staircases to go up to the second floor where there were another seven bedrooms. It was a big house – perfect for a big family!

When my parents moved into the house they had three children. Jan was the first one born in that house. More to follow – another nine!

As children, we loved playing hide and seek with our friends in our house – there were so many places to hide, especially with two staircases in the house.

These are beautiful memories.

As the three eldest boys had to leave home during the war, it meant that we had spare bedrooms and because houses were so scarce, my father was compelled to fill these rooms. First, a young couple lived with us – Bert Rosema, his wife and their young child. They lived in three rooms: one bedroom with a nice balcony became their living room, one bedroom at the side and a small bedroom at the back which was converted into a kitchen. Their rooms were on the second floor.

The housing shortage continued in the Netherlands until about 1960 so people



Schrans 4-6, Huirnum, Leeuwarden

continued to be compelled to fill any free rooms in the house after the war, whether one owned the house or not. It was still the law when Trienke and Theo were married in 1959. They moved into the house of a man who lived alone and he was compelled to accept the Lambooy's to share his house.

When Janny Molenaar was yet to marry my brother, Wim, she was also affected by this law. Her father had died during the war and her mother died in the early 1950s. Along with her two brothers, she inherited the house. However, her brothers were living in The Hague so she was notified that she had to find somewhere else to live as they needed her house to be rented by a family with children because it had three bedrooms. This situation upset Janny so much that her eldest brother returned to live with her in Leeuwarden. As he was a music teacher and needed an extra room for his studio to give music lessons, Janny was able to stay in the house.

Lessons and Laughter: School Days.

My first school was kindergarten, although I don't remember it well. My mother told me that as Leen and Juus went to the primary school and the kindergarten was next door, they took Mieke and me each morning. Mieke and I were very close in age so we did a lot of things together. We were still little and it was too far to walk home alone for dinner in the middle of the day, so Mieke and I stayed with the nuns at the kindergarten for dinner. My mother told me that the nuns adored us but I have no memory of that. I don't remember it at all. It's only what I've been told.

Later, we went to another kindergarten which was closer and Mieke and I could walk there together. I was five and Mieke was four. One year later, I went to a new school which was about 20 minutes from home. I walked to school with Herman and Julius – just the three of us – but Herman was responsible for me. The next year, Mieke joined us at that school, and Trienke to kindergarten. Again, Herman was responsible for all of us, and he took his responsibility very seriously. My mother completely trusted him. Later, he was responsible for me, Mieke, Trienke, Joop and later still, Ben, although Mieke and I were getting a little more independent by then.

Ben always made us laugh. He was fine on the first part of the walk but when we turned the corner, it was always windy. He would always puff and say that he could not walk because he could not breathe. He was only a little boy in kindergarten so Julius would pick him up and put him on Herman's shoulders and he would carry him all the way. That's what you get with a big family – you must do things for one another.

The primary school was a very advanced catholic school for boys and girls, and it was very nice because there were no nuns! I can remember the female teachers – Mevr Telstra,



Toos, Herman

and Mevr Frau Bakker– they were lovely. There were other teachers I can remember – Meneer Van Palen and Meneer Scheer and Meneer Cornelius. I didn't like Cornelius but the others were fine.

There were about 30 or 32 students in a class – eight students in a row x 4. We were all in the same age groups. The boys would sit together, and the girls would sit together.

At school we played things like skipping rope and different types of games at other times of the year. The boys had their own area to play – a huge playground, a *speelplaats*. We did not have a lot of time during the day to play, though, just a quarter of an hour in the morning and at lunchtime you went home for dinner. There was no break in the afternoon.

School times in the morning were from 9am to 12 noon and you go home for dinner. Back at school from 2pm until 4pm. On Wednesday and Saturday you only went to school in the morning from 9am until 12 noon. That was at primary school.

We had sport at school with a dedicated teacher but compared to our [gymnastic] club, it wasn't well organised. It was mainly exercises and ball games, which was difficult as we did not have a sports uniform. Our gymnastics club, Quick, had a special uniform, a little bit like an old-fashioned swimming costume, with a white belt and the name 'Quick' on it.

Because the primary school was a very modern catholic school, we did not have to wear stockings in summer and winter like the other catholic schools. We were allowed to wear socks up the knees and as long as our skirts were on our knees, it was fine. So they were very advanced compared to other catholic schools. It was also the very first catholic school in Leeuwarden that allowed boys and girls to attend together. There were no nuns involved, just male and female teachers, which was great. It was a lovely school and I loved going there. Juus went to the school in year 5 and then eventually the rest of us. Of course, serious Herman looked after us all.

I went to a catholic high school for girls and it was one of the older, established schools with strict rules – you had to wear long stockings. I enjoyed primary school so much but it was so different at high school with all nuns teaching. As my name was Adema, I was always first in the class list. Every morning, the nun would ask if I had been to church as you could go to church at 7 or 8 o'clock in the mornings during the week. Many girls went to church at 8am and then straight to school, and others went at least twice per week. When I replied that I had not been to church, I always got a dirty look. Needless to say, I was not a popular student and I believe that they really held it against me. When my report came home about three times per year about your studies and behaviour, it was never good. My mother could not

understand what was going on because I never had any problems at primary school, especially with studies and behaviour. I told my mother that I believed it was because I only went to church once per week and the nuns just don't like me.

My mother looked into other schooling options for me and she found another girl's high school – not catholic – which may be better for me. We waited until the end of the year and applied for me to attend that school for the next year. I had to undertake an exam first because that school was at a higher level than the catholic school. The exam was in four subjects including math and history. I was so relieved when I passed that I thanked God! When my mother told the nuns that I would be leaving my current school, they were so upset and tried to convince my mother that it would be bad for me, especially mixing with girls who could be protestants or atheists and all that sort of thing. It really scared me but my mother was firm and told them that we had made up our minds. Mieke also went to that high school and loved it too.

The new school was much better and I had so many friends and the teachers were not nuns, just male and female teachers.

I really liked my history teacher – he was the one who took my entrance exam. I don't really know why I liked him. In fact, he did not seem to like catholic girls but for me, it was the opposite. He must have realised that I was not too religious. I also loved my math teacher, Mevr Liefde (Mrs Love). She was incredible and I loved going to her classes. If we had a problem, she would ask us to see her after school. She was alone as her husband had died some years previous, and it was lovely to go to her place for extra lessons. She had tea and nice biscuits and I just thought 'wow'! It made that school so different – no nuns and just caring teachers.

Sport was also different at the new school – it was a very sporty school and we had a proper sports uniform too. The last time I was in Leeuwarden, the school was still there.

Fun and games: activities that shaped me

We played sports at school, did gym, and Mieke and I also played tennis but when we were younger, we loved skating. There was ice to skate every winter but it had to be a severe weather for the canals to freeze over for skating.

We had typical wooden skates – Friesian ice skates. When it was safe to go skating my father would teach us with a little old chair. We would hold onto the chair and skate behind it. That is how he taught us at first and then without the chair. We all went skating with my father and we loved it. My father was interested in sports and my mother was interested in music.

Leeuwarden had a council indoor swimming pool and we were members. We had swimming lessons and we would compete against each other, with Juus and Herman.

Swimming was restricted with males allowed to swim from 7am – 8am; females from 8am – 9am; and families from 9am – noon. Again, in the afternoon, there was a time for males only,

females only and families. Catholic boys and girls, though, were more restricted as they could not swim together in family time, but somehow we always swam in family times.

Our swimming costumes were made of cotton – a tight little fit! It was pretty much the same with gymnastics. Catholics often wore a different type of swimming costume.

Of course, we loved gymnastics the best, especially after the war had ended. I recall going to a big gymnastic competition with Juus, Mieke, Trienke and myself in Scheveningen, a suburb of The Hague. It took a long time travelling in the bus with the whole club. Our club, Quick, was the number one club in the Netherlands and we competed against Belgium and France. Our uniform was black with a white belt and it had the name 'Quick' on it.

We all did bike riding too. We did a lot of sport – gymnastics, tennis, swimming, ice skating and later on when we were a bit older, volleyball.

Music

I had piano lessons when I was in primary school. School only went to 12 noon on a Wednesday and Saturday, so the Wednesday and Saturday afternoons was for other lessons such

as music or choir, or even French or some other language. My mother would ensure that I practised every day.

Friends and dancing

We did so many things as teenagers, always with the same group of friends. We would not go out often; friends would come to our place – the door was always open for our friends. We all had dancing lessons and attended the dance every Saturday night from 7.30pm – 8.30pm, and afterwards back to our place to continue to dance.

I met my friend Henny at dance night. She lived in a different part of Leeuwarden. I invited

Henny to our place on Saturday when we were about 17 or 18 and she was one of our friends straight away. Henny had two sisters who were a lot older than her, married with children so Henny was more like an only child. She loved coming to our place.

Henny and I became very close friends and she was very involved when my mother got ill and then recovered. She loved both of my parents and my father always gave her plenty of attention. He would joke with her, '*Henny, are your lips okay? They look very red – are they bleeding?*' Just silly remarks. Henny's parents were nice too but they were a lot older than my parents even though my parents were not that young either. My mother was 35 when I was born, and my father was 40. However, my parents had a younger attitude and were very active, especially my father was very fit from all the sport.

Soon after the war, Herman, Julius, Mieke and I were able to go to the dances. I did not want to get too involved with boys and we all went out together as friends.

With so many children it was often someone's birthday, and although we had fun, we did not celebrate in a big way. When we were older, we invited friends over to dance. We had a birthday cake and some croquettes or little sausages cut up but there was no alcohol. I loved it when Tinus or Leen invited their friends and it was always about dancing. We had a big lounge room with a parquet floor, and we shifted the furniture so we could dance. My father and mother would sit in the dining room with the sliding doors open and watched us. My father loved dancing and sometimes Mieke would ask him to join – he loved to waltz. Of course, we would know all the dances – foxtrot, tango, samba and waltz.

My parents attended church on Sunday, as my mother was more religious than my father. I still went with them but it was more of a habit and continued to attend church as I knew it would upset my parents if I did not go. When I was younger, they did not make me attend church two or three times per week like other catholic parents, so that was pretty good. Although my mother was religious, we did not have a strict catholic upbringing and it did not matter to my parents if our friends were catholic or not. It was no big deal.



Toos, Gerard



Toos, Henny (1955)

History and Change.

Living through it: World War II

World War II commenced when I was 10 years old and I remember it very well – May 1940. I came downstairs to see both of my parents very upset. They told us that we were going to be occupied by the Germans, so that is something that I always remember – just how upset my parents were. It was only a couple of days later that the Germans came rolling into Leeuwarden with their marching and big tanks. I remember feeling very scared.

I recall my father making a remark that Holland had done the sensible thing and not try to resist as there was no chance that we could keep the Germans out of the country and many more lives would have been lost. Although many Dutch soldiers were killed, ‘thank God they stopped’. Then the Germans just came in. There was no chance.

In the beginning, the war did not affect us very much. We did see German soldiers but the soldiers did not bother us. They were actually decent to the people but there were *groene politia*, that is the green police, and they were what they called the SS. They were horrors and they did all the nasty work. The soldiers just patrolled the streets at night and made sure that curtains were closed properly as no lights were allowed to come out.

During the first two years of the war, there were only planes from Germany flying over to England for bombardment but this changed in the later years when all the planes were flying from England to Germany. The planes flew about every single night. The alarms could go off any time, day or night. During the daytime there were special places to go underground and hide, otherwise you stayed at home. If the alarms went off at night, it would usually wake us all up. However, if it didn’t wake us up, father would wake us and ensure that we would all gather to the one big hallway near the

staircase. As long as we were with our father and mother, we felt safe.

A few times bombs were dropped not far from our place. Once, it happened very close to us, a house across the road where Ben’s little friend lived. He was about 4 or 5 years old and was killed during the bombing. It was so scary because we were living so close to the railway line and main station as they were always aiming for the railway which was a transport route to the main towns in Holland.

At first, school was not interrupted by occupation but in the later years of the war, Germans took over some of the schools as they needed room for their soldiers. When this happened, a boys high school had to share our school so we would go to school from 8.30am until 1.00pm, and then the boys would attend from 1.30pm until 5.30pm.

Food rationing started about two years after occupation, especially for things like meat, fruit and vegetables. By 1944 there was no tea or coffee. There was no soap so we had to use a green-coloured, paste-type soap. There was no toothpaste or toothbrushes, in fact, anything you could think of – items were either rationed or not there at all.

My mother was an incredible dressmaker and made all our clothes. One day when visiting the fabric shop, which stocked rows and rows of the most beautiful fabrics, the owner mentioned that if the war continued, he was not sure how much longer he would be able to source the fabrics and predicted a shortage. When mother relayed this information to father, he insisted that she return tomorrow and purchase as much as she likes. Mother returned and purchased fabric for winter coats, dresses, summer cloths, jackets, slacks – you name it! She purchased so much fabric that she could not carry it home on

her own so the shopkeeper delivered it to our place. It was kept in the attic and it lasted for the duration of the war.

As predicted, eventually there was a shortage of all types of fabrics as well as a shortage of linen, towels and sheets. My poor mother would try to sew sheets together but it was dreadful. No matter what you needed, everything was hard to get – coffee, sugar, potatoes, butter, cheese – but we never went hungry.

The Germans started calling up the Dutch young men when they turned 18, or were over 18 until the age of, I think, it could have been until the age of 50. All the men who were called up were sent to Germany to work in factories or farms because the Germans were so short of labour. It was compulsory. My parents did not want my brothers to be sent to Germany so Martinus, my eldest brother, had to go underground: just disappear.

My father was well known in the province and it was probably the best place to live during the war because there was so much vast farmland. My father had no problem finding a place for Tinus to stay with a farmer and it was safe there because the Germans would seldom go to a place like that. A year later it was Wim's turn to go into hiding and then a bit later after that, it was Jan as well; they had to go when they turned 18.

When three of my brothers disappeared, it meant that my mother did not get a ration for them. The police would sometimes call at our house looking for the boys because they had not registered to go to Germany as they were supposed to report to the police station to register when they turned 18. The police would ask 'where is Martinus' and my mother would answer that he left to register. *'Oh, well, we don't know where he is.'*

There was a list of names of the whole family listed on the front door to our house which included our names and ages. Sometimes the Germans would check the list and when they asked about one of the boys who were

underground my father would answer that as far as he knew, they were somewhere in Germany.

Our house was searched a couple of times by general soldiers and they were usually easy going. They would go upstairs, look at the room and open a wardrobe. But we were searched a couple of times by soldiers who terrified us. They were horrors. They were the fanatics.

We had a big attic with a barn type [gambrel] roof and we had a hiding place but you couldn't see it and had to know where it was located. The wall and ceiling were made of wood and there was a very little door where you could crawl in. Of course, I did not know this at the time because I was so young and our parents knew it would be safer if we did not know. During one search, a soldier shot through the wall but that only happened once. Searches could be very scary.

I remember well on another night that the doorbell rang just as we were finishing the evening meal – I think I was about 13 or 14 at this time. We figured it must be the Germans. Leen was playing the piano and we were singing when the bell rang, so mother told Leen to continue playing. Father came upstairs with two German soldiers who informed us that our curtains were not closed properly. After closing the curtains, mother asked if they would like a cup of coffee. You should have seen the look on their faces! They could not believe they were being asked for coffee. So they sat down and stayed for at least half an hour. Officially, they should have searched the whole house but they didn't. When they left, they thanked my parents so much and said it was beautiful for them to be in a warm room to relax. They actually had tears in their eyes.

Another recollection during the war was one day just as I was ready to go to school, the alarm sounded which meant that I couldn't go to school. When I mentioned to my mother that I was pleased that the alarm sounded as I was scheduled to do an exam at school that day and I was not looking forward to the exam, she scolded me for saying that. I remember she told

me that war is horrific and that the planes were heading to Germany for bombing where there were people living just like us. I'll never forget she said that to me. At that time, the planes were going over about 24 hours a day from England to Germany. The bombardments were unbelievable and endless.

My parents always said that we were lucky to survive the war. We didn't suffer from hunger. Whilst we did not get as much food as we liked, we never went hungry. We always had plenty of milk because Julius would go to the farms to collect milk from the local farmers. In our town, people helped each other. If you were short of something, you could exchange for something you had. It helped that my father was a butcher, although meat was in very short supply and heavily rationed. His business suffered during the war and there was still a mortgage to be paid. Having 13 children did not make it easy. They started their family in 1921, with the last child born in 1940, so they went through the depression, then things got better, and then the war started which affected father's business again.

That last year of the war [1945] was the coldest winter ever with snow and freezing weather. Coal for heating was scarce. We used a hearth for heating which was similar to a type of stove but my father purchased a special thing which you could throw anything into it to burn and keep the living room warm. The weather was so severe; people in the big cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague were starving and dying of hunger. Many of them used a sled to leave the big cities to head north where the Red Cross was more involved. It was unbelievable, people would walk all the way to Friesland and we could see them walking.

The council had issued a large building to the Red Cross and they set it up with mattresses and a kitchen so that people could have something warm and could sleep there, but they had to move again in the morning. We saw people walk past our house and my mother asked them inside. We always had a pot of porridge on the

stove so my mother would serve a big bowl of porridge.

Jan Adema was supposed to be underground but things in the last months of the war became very chaotic; the Germans that were left in Leeuwarden – the old guys – didn't bother us. Jan came home before the war ended and started working with the Red Cross – he was wearing a band with a cross and it gave him freedom in the last months of the war.

One day Jan came home with four little boys – the eldest was 12 and the youngest was 6. Jan said that they could not stay in the emergency beds where they had stayed two nights already as there was such a shortage [of beds]. My mother contacted a few people and found two people who could take one boy each. Can you believe it? The boys had walked all the way in the freezing cold weather from Haarlem – hope you survive! The boys were filthy, covered in dirt and had lice in their hair so before they left to stay with the other people my mother had organised, she put all their clothes into the boiler to clean all sorts of yuck. Then she had to wash the boys completely with that horrible soap. It wasn't easy. She also had to find some clothing for them but with so many kids, she was able to find something. Two of the boys stayed with us.

I always remember one time when Allen was a young baby in the bath and he was playing with the soap. When I got to him, there was hardly any soap left. The first thing I thought of was that if anything like that had happened during the war, my mother would have been devastated. In this situation, though, I thought how lovely that one does not have to worry about rationing. In a funny way, one appreciates these things later on. It must have been difficult for my mother when everyone was covered in lice and it was so hard to keep everyone clean.

My parents were incredible during the war. The situation with the Jewish people upset my father very much because he knew so many Jewish people as they were more or less in the same business as him, and they were all such good friends.

On Tuesday mornings, my father was always picked up by his two Jewish friends – the Witts and I forget the name of the other one – and all three would go to the markets together, about 25 kilometres away. As good friends, we knew all their children and they knew us. Both of the families were able to send one son to America safe and they were the only members in the two families who survived the war – the boys in America. One of the boys that was sent to America at the start of the war returned after the war and visited my father. He told my father everything that had happened to his family. It was so very sad. Stupid war.

There was another Jewish family with whom we used to play with as children as well as another family who had two sons that were called up very quickly at the start of the war – actually sent to camp. One was still in high school and the other just about to commence university when they were sent to the camp. Their mother told my father that they were doing heavy work in camp and did not have proper clothing. My mother helped her alter some clothing and also made jackets out of coats. They spent two days together sewing to make the clothes just right for the boys in camp. I recall walking into the room after coming home from school and my mother had tears in her eyes. At that time, I had never seen my mother cry so I left quickly not knowing what to do. Nobody knew or realized what was going on in the camps. It was not long after that the woman and her husband were also sent to the camp.

The southern Dutch provinces as well as the big cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague were liberated much earlier than Leeuwarden in the north of Holland.

The last German soldiers that were stationed in Leeuwarden were old – they looked like

grandfathers, probably 50-60 years old. There were still some Hitler youth, the young boys of 15-16 years old. They were fanatics so you had to be careful.

I remember one instance during the last days of the war, the Germans were driving in an open car, like a ute, and were driving very slowly and spilling out coal on the road so the women could pick it up in their bags and take it home. Other Germans were on bicycles with no rubber on their wheels – bikes, too, were very scarce, although my father was one of the lucky ones who kept his bike until the end of the war. Nobody was allowed to touch it.

The Canadians liberated Leeuwarden. I was only 15 and it was fun seeing them come into town. Everybody was so happy. Before the Canadian's liberated us, it was very quiet with no Germans at all. Then, before you knew it, other troops walked in but they did not stay for months or months because the war was finished. The war was over, for Europe at least. The war was still continuing in Asia but that did not affect us.

It took some time before things returned to 'normal'. My father was able to recommence his business but rationing still continued. I'm not exactly sure how long rationing continued. Bread and butter were soon in supply again, then tea and coffee too. So while supplies started to get easier, housing was still a huge problem.

Schools also went back to normal again after the Germans left. There seemed to be enough teachers. I think, maybe, that teachers were not called up to work in Germany. I can remember that my history and math teacher were both there for the duration of the war.

The family trade: my father's business



Whilst my father had followed his father into the meat business, my brothers did not continue the trade. My father did not work in the shop but had someone managing it. He knew everything that was going on in the business but mainly concentrated on the wholesale side of things. He was a good businessman.

Tinus enjoyed going with my father to the markets and worked for a while in the shop. Tinus was always a good 'wheeler and dealer' and he was always successful with anything he was involved in. He had a kennel with dogs and won many prizes at dog shows and exhibitions. Eventually, he set up a factory for dog food and was very successful.

Wim took over the shop for a while but Wim was a lovely guy and was too soft with the customers. If they couldn't pay, he'd try to forget about it until my father found out when he balanced the books. We called Wim 'Gandhi' because in those days, Gandhi was often in the news. Wim was so caring and a beautiful

person. We loved him so much when we were little. He was always keeping us entertained when it was miserable weather on a Sunday afternoon.

Jan did not show interest in the shop as he loved making things. From a very young age, he was so clever doing repairs and helping my mother. If wallpapering needed to be done, Jan was there helping. Painting too. My mother thought he was talented and Jan just loved working with his hands. He attended college to become a carpenter and he did very well. Of course, the war spoiled things for Jan and then after the war, too. That's why he wanted to leave and settle in Australia. However, he did quite well when he was working in Leeuwarden.

Herman was not too happy to be in the shop, and Julius was the same, he did not like it at all. Julius went to night school to study accountancy – he loved keeping books and became quite a successful accountant.

Joop, like Jan, preferred the building trade, the same as Ben and they were successful in their fields. Gerard went to university – I think he did electrical engineering. He left for South Africa when he finished his studies.

So while my father did what his father did, it was starting to change and my brothers did not follow in the business.

Jan leaving home

My parents were very understandable when Jan wanted to move to Australia. They could see his point of view and, as I mentioned before, the war years were not good for Jan. He did have a chance to finish college, though, and he was successful from a young age with his work.

After going underground during the war, he was called up to go into the army so would again lose his freedom. Thankfully, he was recognised as a conscientious objector. He soon met Riet and they were married in 1950. My parents knew that his aim was to save enough money for his flight to Australia so he worked very hard to save. When Jan and Riet got married, they moved into our house to save money. They had a lovely room upstairs – like a bedsit. Jan had converted the room and built an *opklaped*, which is a double bed attached and lifted up against the wall, with a curtain in front of it which gave you more room during the day. Jan and Riet were very happy living there, eating with us downstairs. Riet also worked during this time.

Jan and Riet did not have children before they left for Australia as they were too busy saving for the airfare. Whilst my parents understood why they were leaving for Australia, they were also very upset. I remember thinking I would never do that to them. In those days, Australia was so far away and it was very hard to return for a visit. There was a lot of work in Holland after the war and Jan was doing quite well, but my parents never discouraged them. Jan and Riet left Schiphol airport in 1951.



Father and Mother

Stepping into the World: After School Years.

I finished school at 17 but unfortunately, this was the time when my mother was first ill and diagnosed with breast cancer. She was diagnosed after the doctor came to our house to look at Gerard, my youngest brother, who was unwell. My mother told the doctor that she was worried about a lump under her arm. He examined her and within a week she was in hospital and had a big operation.

My mother was born in 1895 and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1947, so she was in her early 50s. In those days undergoing a mastectomy was an enormous operation so she was in hospital for some time to recover. During this time, I took care of the family as I was the next girl in line – Leen had left home and Juus was married. There were only eight of us still at home at this stage.

She was in hospital for six weeks and it took a year before she had recovered enough to use her left arm properly. It was then that a friend of my parents asked if I could help them out with their family as they had just established a fashion business in a place called Winterswijk, about 100kms away from Leeuwarden. Semonette was their name. My parents agreed and so I went off to Winterswijk, a very small but lovely town.

The family had small children but I mainly looked after the baby. Their neighbour was about the same age as me and we became close friends; Rikki was her name. She was involved in music and operetas, not professionally though, and asked if I would like to join her choir so I joined and it was fun. We performed the *Volijke Weduwe*, the Merry Widow, operetta. It was because of the neighbour that I had such a good time in Winterswijk. I stayed for six months before I felt it was time to return to Leeuwarden. When I told Mrs Semonette, Riet was her name, she started crying. She did not want me to return but I knew it was time to

return. My mother had now recovered well from her operation.

When I returned to Leeuwarden, I got a job in the local bookstore. The interview was very strict, asking me this and that, and what school I attended. It was the best bookstore in Leeuwarden but I did not get paid anything for six months. I knew many customers, mainly because they were my high school friends. Once, two customers walked into the store. It was a friend from school and her mother. The boss immediately went to call for Betty, who was a senior staff member and was a librarian. You could ask her anything about books and she would know. She was clever. But Mrs de Jong (the customer) said, *'no, no, Toos knows exactly what I want because it is for Hilda (her daughter)'*. The boss had a puzzled look wondering how I knew the customers – he was a bit of a snob – but it was lovely working there and I enjoyed it very much.

Also, tickets for concerts could be purchased at the bookstore so it was easy to get tickets for Juus and myself. Upstairs was a bookkeeper and an assistant and they were all lovely people.

After I had been working there for about five months, my father happened to see the bookstore owner at his billiard club, the Friesland Billiard Club. When they met, my father asked how I was going at the bookstore and if he was happy with my performance. The boss replied that I was doing very well. So my father said that I should get payment now as I had been there almost six months. The boss agreed (grudgingly) so after that I got paid 25 guilders per week.

I loved receiving a wage and I would enjoy spending it on concerts or going out with friends. Herman would always tell me that I should save some money.

Love, Loss and New Beginnings.

Goodbyes are never easy: my mother's passing

My mother fell ill again in 1952; it had been almost five years since she had her mastectomy. We all thought she was fine and we never talked about the cancer – you just did not do that. I can recall someone saying that my mother had cancer and I was devastated to hear that because one wouldn't just admit it. Jan had already left for Australia when she got sick again. She didn't feel well and she went downhill very quickly.

I quit my job at the bookstore to take care of the family. There were five brothers as well as Mieke and I still living at home. Trienke was in England for a year.

My father was just incredible during this time. He moved mother's bed into the dining room so we could close the doors and she would always be close to us. The nurse would come every day to administer morphine as she was in so much pain. We tried to keep her at home as much as possible but quite a few times an ambulance was called as she had developed fluid on the lungs and other symptoms. My father – and my mother – were incredible; both of them.

My mother never complained. Ever. I was upset one time and told my mother that it was unfair. My father and my mother were both enjoying life again after that horrible war. My mother replied that they had a very fortunate life with 13 healthy children; never lost a child, even during the war. She was always thankful and never complained. My father was amazing, too, because they just wanted us to have a normal life despite her illness, just to go out with our friends and continue doing things as usual.

I can remember coming home from the dance on a Saturday night and my father would be sitting with my mother, just talking and holding hands. They always waited until we were home to say goodnight. He would spend all the time he could with my mother.

Eventually, my mother had to go to the hospital. She had her own big room with a verandah and a lovely outlook – it was a catholic hospital. The nuns were so caring for my mother. One of us were always with her at any time of the day. Herman was often there during meal time and they would also provide him with a meal. We all tried to spend as much time as possible with our mother.

At this time, Trienke was working in England as an au-pair to learn English. She had to be there for one year before her return fare would be paid. My father wrote to the family to explain the situation with my mother and ask if Trienke could return earlier than planned. They were very understanding and paid for her return trip home. Trienke returned in September/October.

It was early December when my mother returned to hospital for the last time and she died in January 1955. It was a great loss for our whole family. I was 25 but Gerard, the youngest, was only 14.

When the doctors warned my father that my mother may not survive the night, he wanted all the children to visit her in hospital. However, he thought Gerard was too young to cope and asked me to stay at home with Gerard. Gerard understood, of course, what was happening. My father thought this was for the best and we did not argue with him. At that time I also thought it was the right thing to do but looking back, I think we all should have been there; Gerard as well.

A twist of fate: how I met John (Johannes)

My parents would exchange letters with my brother, Jan, every week and one day we received a letter from Jan that a young man in Australia was returning to Holland to visit his parents and would most likely come to visit us in Leeuwarden.

Jan had met John Janssens on the same flight from Holland to Australia. They had lost contact once they were in Sydney but one day Jan was on a tram in Mosman, Sydney, and John was the tram conductor. They immediately recognised each other so Jan invited John to visit them in Brookvale – that's how they reconnected.

John had promised his parents he would return to Holland in three years time as that was the condition his father imposed when he signed the permission papers to leave for Australia. John had worked hard in many jobs to save for his return fare. He visited his parents in Eindhoven and then visited us in Leeuwarden.

We were all very interested in hearing about Jan and Australia. For my parents, it was really nice. He had dinner with us and stayed for a couple of days. My brother Herman took him on a lovely bike ride in the country just outside Leeuwarden. John then went back to Eindhoven but came back to Leeuwarden to see me again. I think he stayed for a week then and we also visited Riet's mother near Groningen. We stayed there overnight. I slept with Riet's mother and John slept in the spare room!

John asked if I would like to meet his parents in Eindhoven and my parents gave their permission to visit so we travelled by train to Eindhoven. I liked his father straight away but his mother was not my type. She was so critical of her children, especially Miems and Wim. I thought, here I am, a complete stranger; my parents were the opposite. If I said something critical of my siblings, my parents asked us to stop talking, they were not interested. They did not want nasty talk about one another.

I did not meet John's sister, Miems, at that time as his mother did not have contact with her. I did meet John's younger brothers, Ton and Theo, who were still living at home. I also met Wim who was married and I liked him a lot, they were a lovely couple. And so was John's sister, Jo, but I met her later. I also liked John's older sister, Adrey, and her husband.

John took me to meet Miems who lived in Eindhoven. She was married and was expecting a baby, and they were planning to go to live in Australia. We got along very well.

John's mother was a good cook but she was in the kitchen cooking all morning on Sunday and I thought it was awful. Sunday morning was an important time for my mother, and for all of us. My father did not want my mother to be in the kitchen all Sunday morning; the morning was there to be enjoyed. However, John's mother enjoyed doing all the cooking. It was a completely different family. So different.

We left Eindhoven after three days because my mother was already sick so I could not be away for too long. John took me by train back to Leeuwarden but he soon returned to Australia.

After his return to Australia, we wrote to each other as phone calls were expensive and impossible. Writing was how we kept contact. I promised him I would come to Australia but I could not leave now with my mother so sick.

He did not formally ask me to marry him but it was the reason that I would come to Australia to get married. However, I was having some doubts. How well did we really know each other? Will I like Australia? I knew that if I didn't like Australia, I could write to my father and he would send some money for my return but once you are married, it's a different situation.

My parents knew I was planning to go to Australia and marry John but they didn't talk about it. They would ask how John was and that sort of thing. It was a bit hard to bring the subject up after my mother had died.

John was writing letters all the time asking when I would be coming. He was getting very impatient so I thought I would do something about it. My father was willing to pay for my airfare but John suggested that I would be eligible for an assisted fare. He explained that I should apply at the Australian Embassy in The Hague and explain that I never had a proper job as I was caring for my mother (which was the truth) and that I did not have any money – which was also true because I had spent all my money on going to concerts and sports!

I applied and the Embassy soon contacted me to confirm my passage was fully paid and when would I like to leave – next month? John had said not to mention I had a boyfriend or a brother in Australia as they were keen to have single women as migrants. They were only too happy to accept me into Australia.

Of course, once I received the approval, I knew I had to tell my father and that was unbelievably stressful. My father knew I wanted to go but we had never talked about the details of when. He knew I had applied at The Hague but when I told him that I could leave next month, he cried. And so did I. We were both very upset.

I ran upstairs to my room and cried more. I thought that this was not worth it so I wrote a letter to John to tell him that I had changed my mind and was not going to Australia, and I mailed the letter. When I returned, I told my

father that I had changed my mind and that I had sent a letter to John to tell him of my decision.

Amazingly, my father said that I should have spoken to him first. He said that he felt that I had not done the right thing. He then suggested that I should go but if things did not work out that I was to contact him and he would send the money for my return. Wow! When I think about it now, it was the hardest decision I had ever had to make. My father was so generous and the way he understood and came up with a plan.

I recalled my mother being so sad when Jan left for Australia and there were still 12 of us left. Looking back, it was still one the hardest decisions I ever made.

I had a lot of support from Juus and she knew how hard it was for me. She said that I had done a fantastic job when mother was sick all those years and my father would have been lost without me. She also said that father would not expect me to change my mind and that I should go. Juus was very close to father – I think she was his favourite – and she said not to worry, and that she would be there for father. That helped me a lot. Mieke also agreed I should go, and my brothers too. No one said that I should not go.

My dad had a good talk to John when he was in Leeuwarden. I think my father was impressed that John had only been in Australia for a short time and he had been doing well enough to return to visit his parents, as promised. My father realised that John was not a 'bludger' and he knew where he was heading in life.

Tying the knot: marriage and new adventures

I was a bit scared about the flight to Australia, but being single made it easier. I travelled with a suitcase for my clothes and that was about it. It was my first trip in an aeroplane and I had never been to a foreign country.

I travelled by car to the airport with Juus, Henny, my father (of course) and one of my aunts, Tante Jule. Mieke may have come too. My father did not have a car so Juus drove. My mother had died in January and I left for Australia in March 1955 so I didn't have a farewell gathering.

The plane was small and had about 90 passengers with many stopovers en route. We flew during the daytime and then stayed in hotels overnight. I had only once stayed in a hotel in Scheveningen when we were there for gymnastics. I think we stopped in Cyprus, Bombay, Bangkok and then Biak before refuelling in Darwin and finally reaching Sydney.

I remember that last stop was beautiful and exotic. Biak still in Dutch New Guinea and the hotel had big verandahs and was very tropical. When we came in for a landing, I could see the sea below and its beauty. The hotel was run by the Dutch, speaking Dutch of course.

There was only one other single girl on the flight. The rest were married couples or families. So many people were sick, especially when coming in for landings as it could be so rough. Fortunately, I never got sick but I remember coming back onto the plane after a fuel stopover – phew, the smell!

The heat in some of the places did not bother me much. In fact, I loved it. Food was served and the service was good. Actually, all the meals were good both on the plane and in the hotels. We'd usually leave early in the morning and land late in the day.

| COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT) | |
| The information given hereon is required under the Authority of the Immigration Act and Regulations. | |
| Aircraft Registration | PHLDN |
| Port of Arrival | SYDNEY |
| Date of Arrival | 15-3-55 |
| 1. Point of Embarkation | AMSTERDAM 37 |
| 2. Name in full | ADEMA Catherine 37 |
| (Surname First, Print in Block Letters) | |
| 3. Nationality (As shown on Passport) | NETH 0 |
| 4. Racial Origin | EUROPE 0 |
| (European, Asian, African, Polynesian) | |
| 5. Sex (Male or Female) | Female 1 |
| 6. Age last Birthday | 24 24 |
| 7. Conjugal Condition | Single 0 |
| (Married, Widowed, Single, Divorced.) | |
| 8. Occupation | domestic help 406 |
| 9. Industry | |
| 10. Country of last Permanent Residence | Neth 37 |
| (Permanent Residence means residence for 12 months or longer.) | |
| 11. Intended Address in Australia | Mr. J. Adema 01 |
| 24 Pine Ave. Brookvale NSW | |
| 12. Purpose of Visit | IMIGR 17 |
| PERM 9 | |
| 13. Length of Stay | |
| St 4241-1 | Signature of Passenger. |
| National Archives of Australia | NAA: A12345678 NSW MARCH BOX 3 |

I arrived in Sydney in the morning in March 1955. Jan and Riet were there to greet me, with their son Brent, who was just a little child. John was there to meet me too. So three adults and little boy Brent were there to greet me. It was lovely.

Jan was quite happy about me coming to Australia to marry John. My father wrote a letter to Jan, though, and asked him to never send a young man to our place again!

I stayed with Jan and Riet when I first arrived in Sydney. John had rented a car so we all went in the car to Jan and Riet's in Brookvale. The next day, John took me out for a drive and we went up to Collaroy which was quite an experience. It was all so beautiful.

Jan and Riet lived in a garage at this time so they did not have much room. There was a spare room but I slept in the lounge room which did not worry me. When you are young and single, anything will do.



Leaving Amsterdam via KLM to Sydney, March 1955.

I needed to look for a job so John helped me because I didn't have a clue where to look for a job. The most suitable job would be as a nanny, as it included somewhere to live. It didn't take long to find a job as a nanny in a beautiful house with terrific views and verandahs all around the house. They had two little boys and I accepted the job to look after the boys, dressing them in the morning, giving them breakfast and bathe them, etc. I was used to looking after children because I did a lot of babysitting for my older brothers and sisters, helping Juus with her children, Gea, Meindert and Bram, so looking after children was no big deal. However, these two young boys were terrible and the mother hardly talked to me.

At that stage my English was not the best – just school English. In the beginning one still thinks in Dutch so you translate it from English into Dutch and then from Dutch into English again, so it's not easy. Her husband barely said a word and the house had such an unhappy feeling. She made me do all sorts of work, scrubbing the floor and polishing silver. I would have dinner with the children in the kitchen and later she would have dinner with her husband at around 7pm, then I had to clean up for everyone afterwards.

John felt that they were taking advantage of me and that I should leave. I claimed that I could not do that but I was very unhappy with the situation. John threatened that if I did not resign, he would do it for me. I didn't want him to do this so I gave my notice to leave. However, they were very upset and asked if I could stay a bit longer. They also asked what they could do to make me happy. It seemed impossible for me to be happy there because of her attitude towards me so I did not give in. I left after a fortnight and I was extremely happy to leave.

I went back to Jan and Riet's, of course, but in no time I had another nanny job at Castlecrag,

near the city. I also went to English classes in North Sydney, which John arranged for me. It was a lovely class and as John knew his way around Sydney, it made it so much easier for me. Going to English classes was also a night out for me. The class was full of Italians and the teacher was also Italian but he spoke perfect English. They were all so lovely and it was a very happy class.

The second family, the Harrison's, could not been a better place for me to work and live. They were a beautiful family. Three children: Robert was 5, Lois was 3 and the baby was 4 months old. Honestly, I felt like part of the family. Whenever they happened to have friends over they always asked me to come and meet their friends. It was a Jewish family and every Friday they had a special dinner.

I always went out with John on a Friday night. We would go into town to a milkbar. I loved the milkshakes and hamburgers – they were such a treat. I put on a lot of weight; that's for sure. There wasn't too much to do in Sydney at that time.

John bought a motorbike and on weekends we would visit Jan and Riet, or John's sister, Miems who had also come to Sydney to live.

The Harrison's were so welcoming. She instructed the children to talk slowly to me and explained that I was from a different country with a different language. When I did not understand something, they took their time to explain it. We all just got on so well. I would play the piano and taught the children Dutch songs. Like with Rory (my first granddaughter), the way she can say certain Dutch words; they loved that sort of thing.

At this time, John was living in a boarding house in North Sydney. In those days, single guys lived in boarding houses.

Wedding

When I arrived in Sydney, John wanted to get married quickly but I needed to wait some time. I arrived in March and we were married in the September. I felt this was the right time.

John had been working up north in Queensland cutting cane and making good money. John suggested that we didn't need a big wedding, just the two of us, and that he could organise a priest in Mackay. In fact, he had already written to the priest, and we could marry there. I agreed as this plan was fine with me.

However, my brother, Jan, as well as John's sister, Miems, were not happy with this. They were much stricter Catholic's than me and they said we needed to be married in a local catholic church with our family in attendance. I knew this would please my father as well as my brother, Jan. John agreed but said if we get married in Sydney, we should invite friends as well as family. John was the main organiser and invited a lot of people from his office. I didn't know any of them.

I didn't know what I wanted for a wedding dress. I went to Manly with Riet where there were many dress shops. I felt I got talked into buying a beautiful dress but it had no sleeves or straps and I did not think it was suitable for a wedding, but Riet and the sales assistants assured me it was fine. I had hardly done any clothes shopping in Sydney so I gathered they knew better than me. I showed John the dress because I felt uncomfortable with it and John agreed that whilst it was a beautiful dress, it was not suitable for a wedding. John and I went back to the store to return the dress and found something more suitable. We found another suitable dress which was just beautiful, and I could wear it again. It was pale blue and I also purchased a little hat to go with it.

We were married in the Dutch way with the groom picking up the bride to go to the church. John picked me up and we went to the church together.

We were married at St Kieran's church in Manly Vale – it had to be a catholic church to make sure we were married good and proper – at 9.30am followed by a wedding breakfast at the newly opened Brookvale Hotel.

The wedding was attended by 30-40 guests. John had organised the reception and the food was a fantastic buffet. Riet organised a dinner in the evening for us in the evening with Justin, Miems, and our friends Ina and Jos. It was very generous of her to do that.

That evening we stayed at the Brookvale Hotel, where we had held our wedding reception.

Honeymoon

We travelled by train to South Molle Island in far north Queensland. John said I would see a lot of the country and he was correct. First, we went by ferry from Manly and a train to central station in Sydney. Then by train to Brisbane and all the way up north. It was very exciting. We were away for two weeks but most of that time was taken up in travel time. South Molle Island was warm and tropical. The accommodation was quite simple, little huts right on the beach. We just had to walk down some stairs and we were on the beach.



Honeymoon on South Molle Island, Qld 1955



Building a Life in Australia.

I had to leave the Harrison's when I got married. While she knew I was marrying John, she burst into tears when I told her I had to leave but she was also happy for me.

Prior to our wedding, Jan and Riet introduced us to their neighbours who knew a woman by the name of Ina Robinson who was looking for a young couple to move into her unit to look after her son as her husband was working overseas. We followed up the introduction to Ina and we just clicked. Within a couple of hours she felt like my older sister – it was incredible. We invited her to our wedding, too.

When we returned from our honeymoon, we moved into Ina's place at the Borambil flats in Manly. We had our own bedroom but we shared the kitchen, bathroom and laundry. Ina's husband, Lloyd, came back to Australia six months later so we had to find another place to live. We then moved to Stuart Street in Manly.

John enquired at his work if they could train me in punch card tabulation and they agreed. Each morning, I went into the city office for training and after two weeks, the trainer said that I was competent and that I had good speed. She said that I would get faster with more experience but I should be able to get a job with the skills I had learned.

John knew many people in the industry and asked if they had any openings. I was offered a job at Australian Cash Orders in Pitt Street and started there earning 12 pounds per week, which was good pay in those days. My work section was small with only six girls working, including me. Pat was my supervisor and I couldn't have asked for a nicer group of girls.

Whilst my English language was improving, I still did not have the confidence to buy certain items. For example, I wanted to buy a new pair of shoes and when I told the shop assistant that I was a size 38, they thought it was funny and said that in Australia, I would be about a size 7½. The sizes were different in so many things – fabric sold by the yard, and money was in pounds, shillings and pence. There were so many little things that the girls from work helped me with.

Work, though, was much easier because everything was numerical and very simple. A punch card machine had some differences from a typewriter and it was not like typing at all. Pat did all the programming for us which made things quicker and easier. Most of the girls did not want to learn programming but I asked Pat to teach me and I thought that there was nothing much to it, really. Pat was thankful that I learned this skill as it took the pressure off her a bit.

I worked five days per week and had a small break for morning tea and then lunch. I would bring my own lunch although there was a canteen upstairs.

I worked at Australian Cash Orders for about two years until I was pregnant. When I told the girls I was pregnant they all started knitting all types of things for the baby. They were more excited than me! Usually, you are asked to leave when you are pregnant but as long as my pregnancy was not showing, I continued to work. We needed the money so I did not want to stop. I was good at hiding the pregnancy until one of the managers looked at me and I could feel he did not approve of me being there.

Little footsteps: raising our children

We were living in Stuart Street, Manly in 1957. It was a big, old house owned by a lady who was English. She rented out rooms and there were three young couples living in the house. We had a bedsitter room with a bed that be pushed up against the wall during the day and pulled down at night. We shared the kitchen and bathroom with the other couples. When the landlady found out I was pregnant, she said that we could not stay there with a baby.

At this time, John was being sent to Melbourne to work and we did not know how long he would be away – it could be two months, maybe more. However, when Ina heard about our housing dilemma, she said that I could live with her again as her husband, Lloyd, was being sent to work overseas again, to Indonesia. I moved in with Ina while John was away and I was able to keep working at home.

John asked me to come down to visit him in Melbourne but I was seven months pregnant, so could not fly down. Also, airfares were expensive so I caught the train to Melbourne but I did not stay in Melbourne for very long as John was called back to Sydney. No sooner had I arrived than I had to return by train to Sydney. John flew back to Sydney so was at Central Station to meet me upon my return. When John picked me up, he had shaved his beard but I didn't notice it at first – he wasn't happy that I had not noticed!

We went back to Ina's place but Ina only had one single bed in the spare room and it would be impossible for both of us to sleep there, so John went to the Salvation Army in Manly to sleep. I had met Ina's neighbour, Nancy, who was good friends with Ina. When Nancy heard about our sleeping arrangements, she invited us to stay with her on the ground floor.

At this time, though, I was still working from home and getting paid very well. I had received a big job that weekend, worth a lot of money. I had worked all Friday night and Saturday as well,

because it had to be completed by Monday. So much work! On Monday at my regular doctor's appointment, my blood pressure was very high and he told me I had to go to the hospital immediately. I walked back home and packed my bag and then walked to Manly hospital.

I did not have the best experience in hospital. I was a public patient and I think I would have had a better experience if I had been a private patient. When I finally arrived after that long walk up the hill with my suitcase, the staff were not kind to me. I didn't find it hard to communicate but I was sharing a room with four people and the lady in the bed across from me was Italian and she had no English skills whatsoever. It was very difficult for her to communicate with the nurses.

On Tuesday night my waters broke and the nurse cleaned me up. In the Netherlands, my mother had all her children at home and my father was always there for my mother. It was so different in Australia so I was worried. On Wednesday morning they took me to the delivery room. I remember seeing Riet on the way to the delivery room as her youngest boy, Robert, was born on the Monday morning. She wished me good luck.

I don't remember anything after that. They had knocked me out completely and I did not wake up until about 4.00pm. I can remember waking up and wondering where on earth I was. I didn't know that it was common to be knocked out completely to have a baby – they didn't tell me anything.

I saw a nurse in the distance and called out to ask about my baby. She answered quite casually that my baby was 'just over there'. I then asked for John and burst into tears. I was so upset with the way she said that she would get the baby for me. To be honest, it was very emotional and traumatic. There were no mobile phones in those days, however the hospital had managed to call Nancy and it wasn't until John

had returned from work that he found out from Nancy that we had a baby.

John came straight to the hospital and he was very excited and so happy. By that time I had recovered a little but it was still a horrible and unpleasant experience. As John was working, he could not come to the hospital to take me home. Nancy picked me up by taxi. The nurse carried the baby to the car as I was not allowed to carry Allen.

It was a terrible experience. I was in a foreign country and although I had been here for two years, I never expected such an experience in childbirth. My mother had always said it was beautiful and my father was always by her side – he was so much a part of the whole experience.

Back at Nancy's, she was not in particularly good health so her father, who also lived there, did most of the housework and Nancy's husband, Peter, did most of the cooking. Nancy had a stillborn baby just a year before Allen was born; she adored Allen and wanted to help me so much. It was hard to say no to her offers of help. I used to walk with Allen a lot – walks to Shelley Beach in the sunshine – we spent many



Toos, Allen (North Balgowlah)

hours there. It was lovely just with the two of us.

Thank God, with Eric, it was completely different. By then I was a private patient and had my own doctor. When I was pregnant with Eric, I told my doctor, Dr. Grunewald, of my experience with Allen and that I was still upset about it. He assured me that it would be completely different this time. True to his word, it was completely different and a much better experience.

Again, just before Eric was born, I had another big punch card job. This time, John organised two girls to come to our place to finish the job. However, they seemed to be sitting in our spare room talking a lot and giggling. They claimed they had verified the cards with two different machines but when I checked I found five wrong cards amongst 100. This measure needed to be perfect so I had to re-do all the cards, working until midnight. I woke up again at 4am to continue but my waters broke.

John drove me to the hospital but had to return home as he was not allowed to stay at the hospital and he also had to look after Allen. Dr Grunewald was called to the hospital at about 7.00am. They tried to again use gas but I fought them off and pushed the nurse away. I remember she got a bit annoyed but Dr Grunewald said to leave me alone, and that I knew what I wanted. I think because he was European, he had a different attitude to childbirth, I'm not sure, but he knew what I wanted. It was a much better experience than waking up not knowing where you are or where your baby is. I had a good relationship with the doctor and trusted him. He really supported me, not like the previous doctor with Allen.

I missed my family when I had my children. When I had Allen, I had not been in Australia for very long so I spoke to him in Dutch – it came naturally. Whereas, when I had Eric, I had been in Australia longer so it was different.

Life with children

The boys loved going to the beach, and so did I, and we went most weekends. Freshwater was our favourite beach and we also loved Clontarf beach. Both were different beaches. One was on the ocean with surf and the other on a quiet inlet. We went to Clontarf a lot when the boys were smaller because it was a safe beach with a swimming pool and a playground. Allen would bring a friend with us and they would run around all over the place, but in the next minute they would be in the water. It was the same with Eric – they just loved going there.



Allen (Manly Beach)

The boys were never interested in music but were both very interested in soccer. They trained every Wednesday and played every Saturday. I really enjoyed going to watch them. It was also a social thing as all the parents would be there on a Saturday morning watching the game. It was terrific, even though soccer was very much a European sport in Australia at that time. They played for Forest Killarney soccer

club. Eric continued playing soccer into adulthood and I continued to watch him most Saturdays. When the grandchildren all played soccer, I watched them too!

When they were a bit older, we went more to Freshwater Beach. I remember that Allen could already do a bit of surfing when Eric got his first little surfboard as a Christmas present when he was about six years old. I was sitting close to the edge when he tried to stand on that little board but he would fall, then climb back on it and then fall again. It was so funny to watch. At that time John's parents were visiting us and they also thought it was very funny to watch because he was so determined.



Toos (Manly Beach)

Both boys were fine at both primary and high school. They were self-motivated with homework and I always said that as long as they passed, I was happy.

As far as I know they did not get up to much mischief. Allen used to go out on a Friday night with his friends in senior years, and he climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge one night, but I did not find out about that until many years later!

They were very much into sport and with training and playing over the weekends, and then spending time surfing at the beach, there wasn't too much time left for much else.

They both had good groups of friends – both boys and girls, all from the Killarney area, and they would often come to our place to visit Allen or Eric. I remember one birthday party that Allen went to where the boys had to dress as girls, and the girls had to dress as boys. It was so funny when some of the boys came by our place to pick up Allen and they were all dressed up as girls. They looked so funny.

Allen expressed interest in Year 11 to attend university and we supported him. When I talked to his high school principal, Mr Meyers, he agreed and suggested that Allen choose science. He recommended that Allen get some coaching in English and maths so we arranged that for him. After high school, Allen went to University of Sydney and attained a Bachelor of Science.

Eric was disappointed in his final results at school, as well as his university offer, and decided he would repeat his final year as he also wished to go to University of Sydney. I remember one of the teachers asked what he was doing back at school and said he was wasting his time and his parents money! This attitude was very upsetting for both Eric and me. We supported Eric repeating his final year and told him to let us know if there were any problems.

The teacher did not get all the books which Eric needed. These were supposed to be provided by the school so I had to go to the school to request the books. However, once the books

were supplied, there were no further issues.

Eric was successful in gaining entry to the University of Sydney. At first, Eric was leaning towards becoming a school teacher but Allen suggested that Eric may be better to gain a science degree but if he still wanted to teach, he could do a further one year diploma to become a teacher. Allen also added that teachers do not get paid as well as other professions! Eric took his brothers advice and gained a Bachelor of Science.

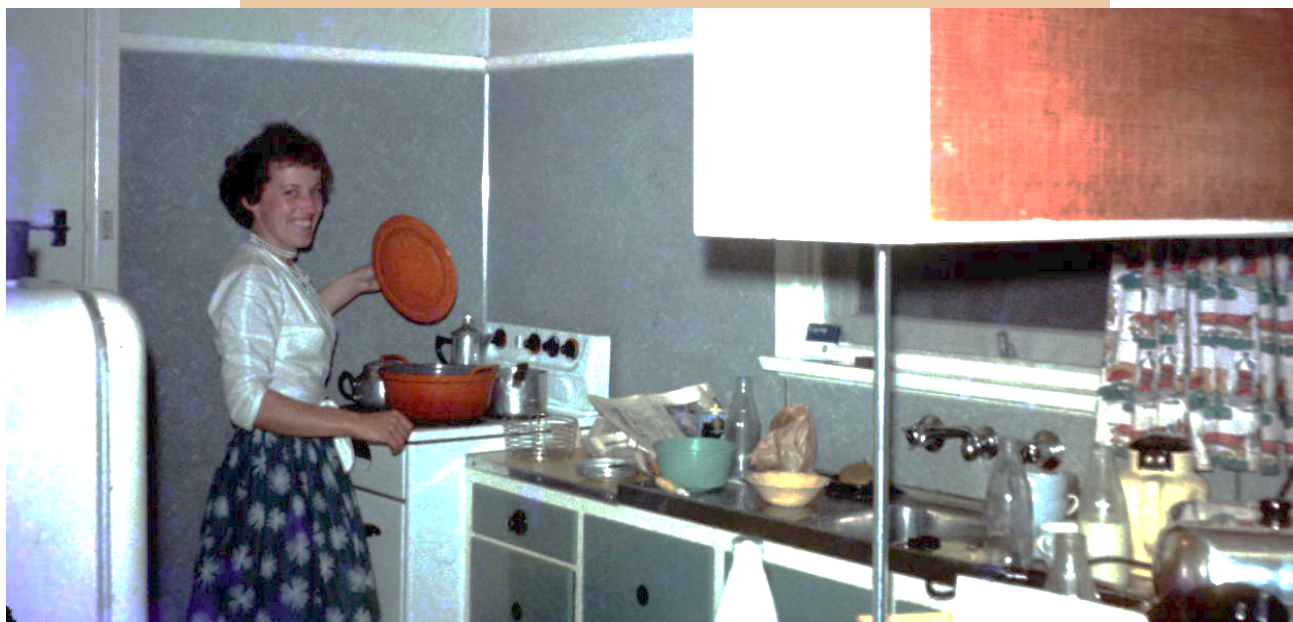


Eric, Toos (University of Sydney)

I was proud when they both completed university and both got professional jobs soon after graduation.



John leaving for work in the morning (Frenchs Forest)



Toos (Frenchs Forest)



Allen, Toos, Eric (Killarney Heights)

Serving up the fun: tennis and good times

I started playing tennis when I was living in Killarney Heights as I was invited by our neighbour, Faylene. Faylene was Australian and Martin was Dutch. One thing about Martin was that he did not have a Dutch accent. I was always amazed. He met Faylene overseas, though, I think in Japan. She just happened to be there on holidays – it was quite incredible how they met.

Martin belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church in Dee Why and was very much involved in establishing the Covenant Christian School where Faylene was a teacher. They had a lot of Dutch friends and were very involved with the Dutch community.

I got on very well with Faylene and she had set up a tennis group for mothers to play tennis. I told Faylene that I had played tennis in Holland for many years but I had not played any sport since being in Australia. So that's how I started playing tennis in Belrose at the courts near the Covenant Christian School. It was around the time that Allen was in high school but Eric was still in primary school – so it must have been late 60s/early 70s.

I played tennis once per week with mothers from that school. They were all Dutch women with Dutch names like *Sjoukje*. I had never known so many Dutch people in Australia! They were all lovely and I played tennis with them every week for quite a few years. Eventually, the group split because that's what happens – people move on – so I was asked to join another group and I played a bit of competition tennis with them.

In the meantime, we had new neighbours who were Japanese. The husband spoke fluent English; however, his wife could speak little English. Our Japanese neighbours asked if we knew someone who could teach English.

Robert Adema (Jan and Riet's youngest son) was still living at home and he was a teacher. I asked Rob if he was interested in teaching English to our neighbour and he really enjoyed it – she made delicious meals for him. Then she wanted to learn to drive so she took professional driving lessons. Finally, she wanted to learn tennis so Robert approached me to see if I could play tennis with her so we started playing tennis at the courts in Killarney Heights.

Another group was playing on the next court and one day one of the ladies approached me to see if we could play with them as some of their group were leaving. So that's how I started playing with Pam, Dawn and a few others. At first we played at Killarney on Tuesday but Pam also played at Melwood on a Thursday so asked if I was interested to play on Thursday too. That's how I started to play tennis every Tuesday and Thursday for more than almost forty years.

Faylene and Martin were such good neighbours over so many years at Killarney Heights. We have been lucky to have had good neighbours wherever we have been – we all helped each other. If you had to go to the dentist or something, Faylene could watch the boys, etc. It was the same when Ben and Janny visited from Holland, they offered extra rooms if we needed them.

When we had Allen and lived in Balgowlah, I really felt, lonely and a bit lost, but with good neighbours it wasn't so isolating. It made such a difference, especially when you are new to the country.

Bricks and Memories: The Houses We Called Home.

North Balgowlah

Allen was born in June 1957 and in early 1958 we finally moved to our house in North Balgowlah. It wasn't a proper house, though, when we moved there but it was a roof over our heads. We had a kitchen, a bedroom and a laundry with a copper and shower. I could do the washing and have a shower! Outside, there was a toilet – a dunny! There was one room for Allen's cot and that was it! It was very primitive. We lived in the kitchen, but we did not have to pay rent any more. We lived there for two years.

We had good neighbours in North Balgowlah. Norm Everhard and his wife lived across the road and I would go for long walks. They adored Allen. Our neighbours on the other side were English and they had a son named Ian. He was six years old and loved playing with baby Allen.

Whilst we were living in North Balgowlah, I was again offered to do some work from home. It was good money and I would mostly work when Allen was asleep. Sometimes, Allen would play

with a card that I had made a mistake on. I was once offered a job which could not be done at home so I had to go into the city office and a young couple came to our place to look after Allen. I must say that I loved dressing up nicely to go into the city to work again, but afterwards we decided that we would never do that again.

I really enjoyed playing and being with the boys, and we all especially loved the beach. When we were living in North Balgowlah, I would walk with Allen often all the way down to Manly as it was downhill. However, we would catch the bus back home. Sometimes we would visit Jan and Riet in Enoch Street, Manly Vale and after an hour or so, John would pick us up and drive us home. I did a lot of walking with Allen.

I always got on well with Jan, even though he was a bit older than me. By this stage they had three children – Brent, John and Robert, who was the same age as Allen. We always had a happy time when we were together.

Frenchs Forest

About to have two children, we could not continue to live in North Balgowlah so John found another house built by a spec builder in Frenchs Forest. It was a proper three bedroomed house with a bathroom and a flushing toilet inside, but it wasn't connected to the sewer – it had a septic tank. However, we had trouble getting a loan from the bank to purchase it. The builder suggested we go to the Dutch government and they would help us. Sure enough, the Dutch government provided a loan to purchase the house.

We moved to Rangers Retreat Road, Frenchs Forest in 1960 and discovered it was full of mosquitos. We didn't have screens on the house and the first night we moved in was the worst night ever! In no time, John organised screens for every window and door because it was impossible without screens.

As luck would have it, we again had great neighbours. Kathy across the road was also pregnant and she had a little car – a Morris – and we always timed our doctors appointments so we could travel together. How good was that! Kathy's baby was born a couple of months

after Eric. Our neighbours on the other side had two girls, aged 10 and 8 – there were no babies on the other side but we were surrounded by young families.

Eric was born in March 1960 and as a baby he slept in our room at first, then he shared a room with Allen. We had three bedrooms but the boys were always together in one room.

We had been living in Frenchs Forest for nearly a year when we received news that Trienke and Theo were coming to live in Australia. We were very excited by this news. They arrived at the end of 1960 and stayed with us in the spare room for about four months until they moved to Woolwich. Their son, Olaf, was only one year old when they moved to Australia.

At this time, I was having driving lessons. Trienke looked after the boys while I had my lessons. I got my drivers licence but I did not have a car as John needed it to get to work. However, in order to do the shopping and run errands once per week I would drop John in North Sydney for work in the morning and then pick him up in the afternoon to return home. This gave me a little bit of freedom.

Not long after Trienke and Theo left, John went to Cooma with his mate, Jos, to meet up with some Dutch friends who knew Jos. One of the Dutch guys was called Joop Ditters who was living and working in Melbourne but wanted to

come to Sydney. He had not been in Australia for very long. Joop Ditters had always wanted to be a pilot but discovered he was colour blind when undertaking his medical so it put an end to that dream. He was so disappointed and he decided he would get away to Australia. John offered Joop to come and stay with us and although he was younger than us, we all just clicked – he was like my youngest brother, the same age. Allen and Eric adored him; they called him Uncle Lolo. Instead of staying for a couple of weeks, Joop stayed for a few years.

At that time his job was delivering bread early in the mornings so he would be home by about 1.00pm and as I did not have a car at that time, he would take us all out and about, especially to the beach – no wonder Allen and Eric loved him so much. We really had some fun times, he was so lovely.

The neighbourhood in Frenchs Forest was very family oriented. Everyone seemed to have children – across the road, next door – there was no traffic on the road and kids could play outside. Allen's little friend, Martin, lived across the road. Allen would stand in the front of the window looking out across the road. If he saw that Martin was wearing something in blue, Allen wanted to wear blue too. They were so funny together, and they were always playing together. Martin also had a big dog which we all loved.



John, Olaf, Allen, Trienke, Eric, Toos (Frenchs Forest)

Killarney Heights

Whilst we were happy living in Rangers Retreat Road, we had heard of a new housing development in Killarney Heights with blocks of land for sale by LJ Hooker. We went to have a look and while there were only a few houses there, all the amenities were there. We first looked at the Roseville side of Killarney Heights where there were beautiful outlooks over the water. It was winter so it was very cold and windy, then the agent showed us the other side, Kilkenny Avenue, a slightly downhill big block of land with beautiful gum trees and big rocks. I sat there on the big rock looking out across the valley and I thought this is where I want to live. I just knew it. The sun was shining and there was no wind. It was always windy at Rangers Retreat Road. It was so peaceful and lovely at Kilkenny Avenue and I told John it was so perfect that I loved this block of land.

So that was it. John made all the financial arrangements to purchase the block of land in Killarney Heights. He purchased it in both our names, which was quite unusual in those days as it was often only in the man's name. I think we paid five thousand pounds for it. There were sealed roads with everything connected – gas, electricity. You could just build your house and move in. We could only get a bank loan of three thousand pounds so we sold Rangers Retreat Road and rented a place on Wakehurst Parkway while as our new house was being built. From there, I would drive Allen down to Frenchs Forest Primary School as I had a car by then – a little Morris. Allen loved going to school.

I wanted my brother, Jan, to design the house but Jan said that Theo Lambooy should design it as he was an architect. We knew we wanted verandahs, open plan and a separate kitchen so it gave him an indication of what we wanted, and Theo designed a wonderful house for us. Jan Adema got very involved in managing and building the house. John often said that he built the Killarney house and he had – he organised



and managed all the bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, etc! We moved into Kilkenny Avenue, Killarney Heights in 1965.

The primary school in Killarney Heights had just been built but there were only four classes, so Eric could commence at Killarney Heights. However, Allen had to go continue at Forestville Primary because Killarney Heights Primary did not have his school years. It was a bit difficult with them going to different schools but they were both able to go to Killarney Heights High School as the school had been completed when they were ready to start.

When we moved into our new house at Kilkenny Avenue, the house was finished but the garden had yet to be done. It was lovely moving into a real house of our own. We had an ensuite which was great and there was no septic tank so there were no worries about mosquitos – and it had a modern kitchen. We did not have any fences at Killarney Heights and as the next block of land was lower than ours, we had a beautiful outlook straight across the valley. Again, there were a lot of children and we had lovely neighbours. I always thought it was a little bit of paradise.

There was a shopping centre within walking distance which had everything you needed, and some things were delivered to us. Life was pretty good. The milk was delivered to our house every morning and in those days the milk had cream on top. In the morning for breakfast, we each had our own bottle of milk as it was lovely to pour the cream from the top onto the porridge!

We were in Killarney Heights when we got our first dog. We all went to the RSPCA to pick a dog and there was one dog there that looked at me in a certain way that I felt like he was begging to come with me. The dog had big eyes and John, Allen and Eric all liked that dog too. However, the officer explained that we could not have the dog as the dog had only been there for one week and they had to give the owners two weeks to claim him. We were disappointed

but we would just have to wait because that was the rule and it was fair enough.

Later, John received a call that the dog was still available and it was such a great surprise. We decided to call him Tag and he was part of the family straight away. The boys loved Tag and he was such an incredible dog. Every day at around 3pm Tag would sit in front of the window and wait for the boys to come home from school. When I heard Tag's tail go, I knew Allen and Eric must be home. Then she ran to the front door to greet the boys as she was so happy to see them.

She was good company and was always with me. We did not have to worry about fences – she would go out and about for a little but never far. I always had good conversations with her, she would always follow me when I was having a shower or if I was hanging out the washing. She would always come with me if I went to the shops, whether it be at the local shops or Chatswood. I would have the car window down just a little and she would sit and wait for me. She was an incredible dog.

The boys did not do any chores around the house when they were little but did help around the house as they got older. Eric loved helping me with the wallpaper – he loved doing that, and Allen did the lawn mowing for me. I did the lawn mowing for a long time until someone told me that I had a husband and two boys who could do it. So Allen did the lawn mowing and he didn't mind doing it. Allen would also put out and bring in the garbage.

I enjoyed sewing and used to sew clothes when the boys were little. I didn't enjoy knitting so much, it wasn't my thing. Sewing was much quicker and I made myself some nice outfits. My mother taught me to sew and I had to learn as, money-wise, it would save a lot of money. Most people sewed in those days. It was so different. There were so many shops just selling beautiful fabrics. Chatswood had a shop with walls and walls of beautiful materials. Grace Brothers also sold it and David Jones, of course.

Mona Vale

For quite some time after John retired, he started mentioning that we should think about moving from Killarney Heights as the upkeep of the house and the garden was getting harder to manage. It was a lovely place but as we were getting older, it was taking more time to care for the property. We started looking at properties but could not find anything suitable that would replace our wonderful living conditions at Killarney Heights. We were having lunch with Eric and Judy when Judy suggested we visit some new townhouse units just completed in Mona Vale, closer to where both Allen and Eric lived. Straight after lunch we hopped into the car and looked at the units. There were twelve units in the complex and although the one we

looked at was #3 in the front of the complex, we really liked the one at the rear, #10. We liked it straight away.

The move to Mona Vale was good for us. As it was close to both Allen and Eric, the family were able to visit us more frequently. The grandchildren often came after school to study and stayed for dinner. Whilst we were very happy in Killarney Heights, we were equally happy in Mona Vale. It was close for John to walk to the beach every day and it was close to shops and medical appointments. Everything was within walking distance. Even the express bus to the city was easy to catch if I wanted to go to a concert in the city.

Narrabeen

We lived in Mona Vale for 16 years before the stairs in the unit were becoming too much for John. We had stairs from the car park in the basement to the ground floor of our unit, and then another set of stairs from the ground floor to the bedrooms on the first floor. Even when Rory and Jake had their children, I could meet them easily in the nearby park.

It was so difficult to move from Mona Vale but it was becoming increasingly unsafe for John. He was having many falls and he was starting to show signs of dementia. It was only after discussions with Allen and Eric that we began to seek out alternative accommodation for us.

In 2002, we found a retirement village unit in Narrabeen which was suitable. Narrabeen was still close to Mona Vale for our shopping and medical facilities, as well as still close to Allen and Eric. We moved into a lovely new two bedroomed unit all on one level. Even the garage is directly connected to the entrance of the unit and an emergency buzzer is in each unit in case we needed urgent assistance. The bonus of the retirement village is that it also had a nursing home on site, in case one of us needed extra care.

Wonderlust: Our Travel Tales.

1965 visit to Holland

Not long after we had moved to Killarney Heights in 1965, I received a telegram from my brother Ben advising they had arranged an airline ticket for me to come to Leeuwarden for my father's birthday on 8 June. It was my father's birthday present. I was in complete shock. John had just started a new job at Grace Brothers and we had two little children – it was impossible. When I told John he was supportive and said that I must go. I did not know how John would manage and he said that we had plenty of time to organise things.

Renata and Heiko were very good friends and we told them about my trip to Holland. Renata was pregnant at the time and John suggested that they could move into Killarney Heights while I was away so Renata could help out. They were renting in Mosman and Renata also knew the boys quite well. Heiko and Renata moved into Killarney Heights a week before I left for Holland to get used to everything. They stayed with us for 8 months and then moved into the home they had built in Elanora Heights.

Flying back to Holland was such a different experience than when I flew from Holland to Australia. John suggested that I should fly to Frankfurt first, stay overnight and have a good sleep there before I flew into Amsterdam. So that's what I did, and I also went to a hairdresser and had my hair done. The next day I was off to Amsterdam. It was incredible. The whole family was there to greet me at the airport, including my father's housekeeper! I had never met her before but she was just part of the family and she was so kind. At first, my brothers and sisters were going to keep my arrival as a surprise for my father but then they decided to tell him a week before I arrived. He was over the moon. He was pinching himself, he was so happy. Not only were my brothers and sisters at the airport but also some of their

children – Gea, Meindert, Bram and others. I remember Gea commenting that father knew more about Allen and Eric than the other grandchildren because I was always writing about my boys.

We stayed at the airport for quite a while, ordering coffee and cakes. It was such a big event and it was so easy to organise to meet at the airport, as only Juus and Ben still lived in Leeuwarden. My brothers and sisters had spread out to different places. Mieke and Jaap were at the airport; they lived in The Hague. Leen lived in the southern part of Holland. While everyone was there for father's party, it was just fantastic seeing everyone for that first time at the airport.

After ten days of being home, I went away with Juus for a few days first travelling to Amsterdam to see Gerard, the youngest in the family. Then we went to The Hague to see Mieke and Jaap and their two little girls. They lived in a unit and we had so much fun together. We were still going until about 1.00am thanks to Mieke telling one joke after another. She is the best talker and teller of jokes. Jaap said that enough was enough! We went to bed but then Mieke, she just could not stop with her jokes. At one stage Jaap said '*godverdomme*', so we were quiet after that.

It was so special and such fun. Each day father would call and ask if we were okay and what had we done and what we had eaten. We then went to visit Leen in a place called Heusden in the province Brabant. After that we made our way back to Leeuwarden. I stayed with my father for the rest of my time in Holland and that was very special time for me. It was a great trip and I was pleased I could do it on my own as it was special time with my father as well as my brothers and sisters.



Paris



Italy

1969 Visit to Holland

We took the boys to Holland in 1969. The trip started by John going on a big business trip and it evolved from there. He was travelling to Canada and European countries leaving in April or early May. Allen was 11 and had just started high school but he could still travel as a child so the fare was half price. Allen had his 12th birthday in Holland and I had to get permission from the headmaster of Allen's school, Meyers was his name, for him to be absent from school. The teachers prepared homework for Allen to complete. Allen was good – he did the homework every day.

I travelled with the boys to Amsterdam and we met up with John who was there for business. Allen was a good traveller but Eric was a bit more anxious. The flight was good and the stewardesses were so helpful with me travelling with children. The plane was not full and the boys sometimes helped the stewardesses and were also able to go to the cockpit. Allen really loved that. When Eric came back, he said that the pilot was asleep!

I had spoken a lot of Dutch with Allen so his Dutch was very good, and he could understand everything. He would go out with Meindert and they would go all over the place. I did not speak Dutch with Eric so he found it very difficult. I took Allen and Eric to the markets on a Friday – Allen just loved the noise and smells, and the stall holders often picked a child and made them come to try something. Allen said he wanted to go the market again on the next Friday but I could not do it. He said that I did not need to go and that he could go on his own. It was not far from where we were staying so I was fine with him going alone.

The markets were really like a festival and a lot of people would go there because things were cheaper. John's mother used to go to the market every Friday. Despite my mother having 13 children, she did not go to the market, but

many, many people would go to the markets to buy fish, vegetables, everything.

There was a place in Leeuwarden called the Oldehove. It's an old tower. On one side there is a big area where people can skate in the winter, and on the other side there used to be a graveyard, but they were building in this area when we were there. The graveyard dated back to the 1800s and with the building works, they were digging up and finding relics. Allen and Meindert loved going to the building site. Meindert was much older than Allen but Allen loved being with him. One day Meindert found a human skull at the building site and gave it to Allen who loved it. Allen asked me if he could take it back to Australia and I thought (crikey), I don't know if that is allowed. Allen pleaded with me to find out if he could take it back to Australia. Believe it or not, I did find out and fortunately, we could not take it back with us.

My brother Herman and his wife Marie were still living in my father's house as they were saving money to buy their own house. Everyone else had left home by this stage. Herman and Marie lived downstairs where there was a lounge and dining room, and the bedrooms were upstairs. When we were there in 1969, Eric would play soccer in front of the house. Eric had a good time playing soccer with Herman and Marie's boys.

We also went to one of the islands, Ameland, where Juus had a summer house. We stayed there for a week as the weather was good. Ameland does not have any cars so we rode bikes everywhere and we flew kites. The ocean and the sand dunes were lovely.

During that trip we also spent some time with John's family in Eindhoven.

Camping holidays

Our friend, Jos Bots, had an old campervan and in 1968 we went in the campervan to Noosa, Queensland – to a camp right on Noosa Beach. We travelled up the New England Highway and stayed the night just past Armidale. I heated up meals I had prepared at home so that we could have dinner. I remember the night was freezing cold in the campervan. John and I would sleep on the double bed at the back of the van; Allen slept in the front and Eric slept on the seats. On that night, Allen woke up to say he was freezing so I said to come over to our bed. Shortly after, Eric woke up to say he was so cold, so he came over. So there were now four of us in the bed and then our dog, Tag, came and jumped on all of us! We were nice and warm and we had a good sleep. In the morning you could see how cold it was because there was ice on the windows. It was much warmer in Noosa.

Favourite countries

Of course, Holland! I don't know how many times I have been back over the years. John was very supportive of my travel to Holland, especially the very first time I returned on my own for my father's birthday when the boys were quite young.

I fondly remember Juus sending me a letter for my birthday and let me know that she was visiting South Africa to see Meindert in November 1975 and asked if I would like to join her. Again, John was very supportive of me travelling on my own to meet with Juus. John was often away for business so that is why I often travelled alone.

Later, when John had retired, we always travelled together. We were very good at planning trips to Holland and always seemed to add on a visit to another European country. We visited Hungary and another time we visited Prague with John's brother and his wife and we

It always took us two days to get to Noosa as the roads were not as good in those days. The old Pacific Highway was not easy, that's why we used to take the New England Highway.

Years later, having our own campervan, we used to camp some weekends at Avoca on the central coast, just north of Sydney. I would prepare meals for Friday and Saturday nights and then we would go back on Sunday. It didn't take long to get there and it felt like a real holiday. We would all swim and Allen and Eric would surf or whatever, then have dinner. We did that many times, it was lovely. We always took our dog, Tag, with us too. Dogs were more welcome in those days and were not a nuisance.

always had a good time with them. Another time we went to England and Scotland.

I remember one time staying with Ben in Leeuwarden and he suggested we go to Paris for the night so we just hopped in his car and off we went to Paris. It was so spontaneous and easy.

Back in 1979 John and I also travelled for six months through Europe in a campervan. We picked up the campervan in England and despite the van having a Dutch number registration plate, it was a right-hand drive vehicle. We caught the ferry across to Belgium and we really had to concentrate on driving on the correct side of the road. It was very easy to make a mistake and drive on the wrong side of the road, especially when filling the car with petrol and driving out of the service station.

It was very convenient driving over the European borders in a car with Dutch number plates. We drove from Holland into Belgium, through France and Spain, and we were never asked to show our passports, which, of course, were Australian passports. After two weeks of staying in a lovely villa with Juus, who was then living in Spain, we decided to take an organised tour to Morocco. We travelled by ferry and bus

to Morocco but it was only when the tour guide asked us for our passports for the hotel, he realised that we would need a visa to return to Spain! Apparently, we should have had a visa for Spain before entering in the campervan! He quickly organised photographs to be taken and arranged for a visa. In fact, we later discovered that we needed a visa for many of the countries that we visited in Europe!

Papua New Guinea

Allen went to work as a volunteer working on the first Papua New Guinea census for two years. I was very proud of him but I was also a bit worried that he was going to be able to do the job. Another thing, when he had his medical for the visa it was discovered that he needed eye glasses. I had never noticed that he needed glasses but Allen said he always sat at the front in lectures because he could not see the board. Even he was unaware that he needed glasses!

We visited Allen in Port Moresby with our friend, Jos Bots. I cooked a curry to take with me for Allen and at Port Moresby airport, I was questioned as to what it was. I told them it was for my son working there!

It was quite an experience visiting PNG. We visited the capital, Port Moresby, where Allen was working, and we also visited Madang on the north coast. John, in particular, got annoyed with all sorts of things while we were there so Allen told him that if he wasn't happy, he should go home! I thought so, too, it was a third world country so you can't expect that everything is the same. Allen seemed quite happy working there. After PNG, Allen spent 18 months working in New Caledonia on census projects across the Pacific Islands. I also visited him in Noumea.



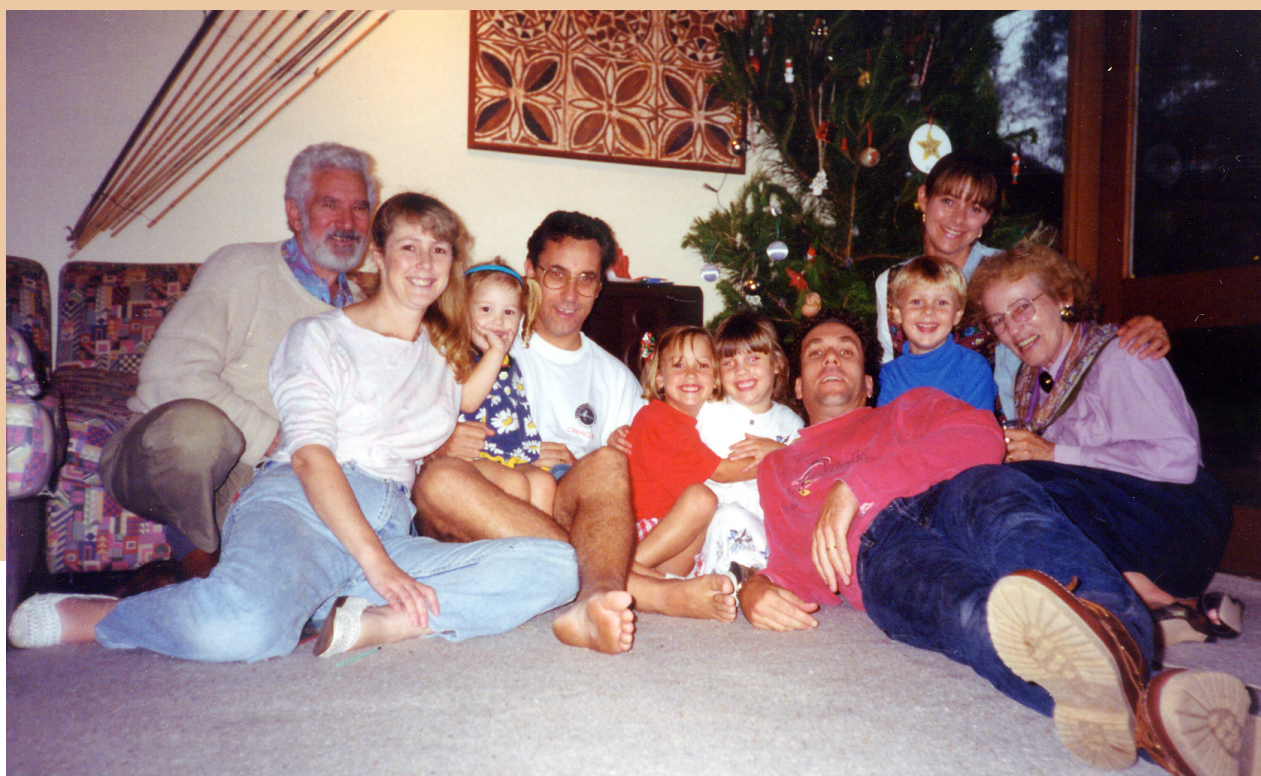
Toos, John (Sydney)

Family visitors to Sydney

Most of my siblings have visited me here in Australia and some of them many times, especially Juus and Ben. Tinus, Wim, Herman, Julius, Mieke and Joop have visited but not Leen, Herman or Gerard. I think they all enjoyed their times visiting us in Sydney and travelling to other places in Australia.



L-R: Allen, Wendy (with Rory), Toos, John, Toos, Judy, Eric (with Haley) - Killarney Heights 1990



L-R John, Wendy, Nena, Allen, Rory, Haley, Eric, Jake, Judy, Toos (Circa 1994)

Wisdom and Reflection.

Legacy and what matters most

Allen met Wendy when they were both working in Papua New Guinea in 1983 and after there, they lived in New Caledonia for 18 months before returning to Sydney in 1985. Wendy was originally from Melbourne and they married in 1987. Their wedding was very much a surprise as they only told us the night before! It was a small wedding with just two of their friends as witnesses as well as John, me, Eric and Judy in attendance. On the following Sunday they invited all their family and friends to their house to celebrate.

Eric met Judy, who was travelling through Australia from Canada in 1987. A group of Eric's friends had actually met Judy in Whistler, Canada, when they were travelling there. Judy was working at a bar in Whistler. When she came to Australia to visit, she met up with Eric's friends again – and then met Eric. She never returned to live in Canada again! They were married in Hawaii in 1992. It was a good place for Judy's family in Canada to get to, as well as us from Sydney.

Both Allen and Wendy, and Eric and Judy went on to have two children each. Allen and Wendy have Rory (1988) and Nena (1992); Eric and Judy have Haley (1989) and Jake (1991) – our grandchildren.

Having grandchildren was the most enjoyable change in our lives. I can remember the first time I took Rory in the back of my car in a baby seat capsule when she was just a little baby, I was so nervous to drive and scared I would do something wrong. Such a responsibility.

I got over my anxiety and it was always lovely having them around. First Rory, then Haley and then all four of them. Our place was perfect for the grandchildren to run around and was very safe. John made a gate and when we opened all

the bedroom doors to the verandah, they could safely run around.

They loved jumping on the bed with John and also liked to dress up and put on my shoes. They would wake up early and jump into bed with us. Rory, Haley and Nena liked to be in the middle but Jake would only be on my side.

Nena loved being in the kitchen to sit there and paint or draw. If I was looking after them for the day, they would often come with me to tennis and all the other tennis players knew them well.

They loved it when I took them to the \$2 shop in Forestville and gave them \$2 to spend. They would take such a long time to pick out something they wanted for just \$2. If something was more expensive, say \$3 or \$4, I would say "too expensive".

They loved their food. They would always request porridge for breakfast with freshly squeezed orange juice. Jake and Nena liked fish fingers. Rory, Haley and Nena were all good at eating vegetables, but not so much for Jake. They all loved my lentil or chicken soup – that was their favourite.

All our grandchildren have done well in their lives and some have children of their own. I'm also fortunate to be the special *Oma* of Sophie, who came to live with Eric and Judy when she was in her teens.

I have six great-grandchildren between them. I think I am getting old, but it is lovely. All my grandchildren visited regularly when they were younger. That was before they, themselves, had little ones, of course. They still visit often even with their little ones. They ring and send photos each week too.



Rory, Nena, Jake, Sophie, Haley, Toos, John (2020)



*Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren
Jake, Elsie, Rory, Aurora, Rosie, Poppy, Oma, Imogen, Haley, Saskia (Newport 2023)
Absent: Nena*

What have you been most grateful for in life?

First of all, my parents. As a child, you just take it for granted. When you look back you can say they were fantastic and so caring, not only to us children but also my father was so caring for my mother, too. My mother did not tolerate complaining, if we complained about someone, she would say that she only wanted to hear good news.

My mother was religious. Every evening before we went to bed when we were little, we would all go on our knees to pray. I can always remember her face when she was praying for

peace during the war. She was always caring for other people. If we came home from school saying that we were starving, she would answer that we did not know what it was like to be starving. Both of my parents were tolerant and did not bother if our friends were catholic or not.

I've been so lucky to have such a close relationship with my sons, my daughter-in-laws, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren's lives.



*Back row: Toos, John, Jake, Sophie, Mitch
Middle row: Nena, Wendy, Judy, Emily (with Elsie), Haley (with Imogen), Hugh
Front row: Alex (with Rosie), Rory, Poppy, Eric, Allen
Christmas 2022. Aurora and Saskia not yet born.*

Any regrets

Not really. I'm sure we all had times where we could have done things differently but I have nothing that I regret.

Changes in the current world

I feel that the way things are in the world now, that people have changed. If you listen to the news and all the politicians, there is so much going on, for example in America.

There seems to be so much hate in the world now. Whether its Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist or

Christian people; it is all just so sad. When I think about when we were kids too, though, there was so much discrimination against Jewish people always, and you were identified by religion such as Jewish or Protestant. I feel this existed in certain ways and can cause a lot of hate – it should be the opposite.

The story continues

Unfortunately, it did not take too long after we moved to Narrabeen for John to need extra care in his daily life. He started to forget things more frequently and was having trouble to walk without falling. I was starting to struggle to care for him and keep him safe. I just did not have any strength or energy left to help him. With the assistance of Allen and Eric, we made the extremely hard decision for him to enter the nursing home. I felt very guilty about doing this as I promised him many times that I would not send him to a nursing home. But there was no alternative.

John has now been in the nursing home for two years and I visit him almost every day for his evening meal. I still have my meal at home because I prefer my own cooking than the meals in the nursing home! His dementia has deteriorated in this time and he most often

thinks I'm his sister. He gets a good surprise when I tell him I am his wife! He is in good spirits, though. His walking has also deteriorated more and he uses a walker or wheelchair in order to get around. Apart from his dementia, he is in good physical health. He is starting to speak only in Dutch instead of English now.

I enjoy living in my unit at 94 years of age and, despite some health issues of my own, I do not receive any assistance as I am still able to care for myself. I do my own cooking, cleaning and shopping. I still drive to the supermarket once per week and whilst I finished playing tennis and bush walking a few years back, I continue to meet up with my tennis or bush walking friends for a weekly coffee or a lunch out somewhere. Allen, Eric, Wendy, Judy, the grandchildren and the great grandchildren visit me frequently.¹

Words to carry forward

It's hard to give advice but I wish they have a good life. Enjoy sport – I think sport is very important to your physical and mental health.

Since the time of this transcription, John Janssens died on 14 April 2025 from complications relating to his dementia.

Toos's heart issues have deteriorated and she has just moved into a caring nursing home whilst being as independent as possible.

Australian Adema Family – 2009



1 Jan (John) Adema †
Riet Adema †

2 Brent Adema, partner Fran
• Rochelle Adema
• Todd Adema

3 John Adema

4 Robert Adema, partner Diana †
• Katie Adema
• Tess Adema
• Tom Adema

1 Toos (Catharina) Janssens Adema
John (Johannes) Janssens †

2 Allen Janssens, partner Wendy
• Rory Janssens
• Nena Janssens

3 Eric Janssens, partner Judy
• Haley Janssens
• Jake Janssens

1 Trienke (Catharina) Lambooy Adema
Theo Lambooy

2 Olaf Lambooy, partner Sally
• Loestje Lambooy
• Sam Lambooy
• Mia Lambooy

3 Martin Lambooy, partner Annette
• Ashley Lambooy †
• Harrison Lambooy
• Max Lambooy

Karin Lambooy, partner Edwin Wingelaar
• Jacinta
• Sasha

Not present on this occasion

Janssens (Adema) Family – Christmas 2024



1 Catharina (Toos) Janssens Adema
John (Johannes) Janssens not present

2 Allen Janssens, partner Wendy

2 Eric Janssens, partner Judy

3 Maryanne Akerman Dijkstra, partner Alex
(Maryanne is the daughter of Meindert Dijkstra)

3 Rory Thompson (Janssens), partner Alex
Nena Janssens (not present)

3 Haley Attard (Janssens), partner Hugh
Jake Janssens, partner Emily

4 Emma Akerman, Nathaniel Akerman
Daughter and son of Maryanne and Alex

4 Rosie Thompson, Aurora Thompson
Daughters of Rory and Alex

4 Imogen Attard, Saskia Attard
Daughters of Haley and Hugh
Poppy Janssens, Elsie Janssens
Daughters of Jake and Emily

3 Sophie Rae, partner Mitch
(Sophie is adopted daughter of Eric and Judy)

